

**Linda Clair**  
**Four-and-a-half-day Meditation Retreat**  
**Cold Ash Retreat Centre, Newbury, UK**  
**13 – 17 November 2019**  
**Transcription from Audio Recordings**

**File 3b – Friday morning discussion session**

Linda: Everyone's still here, I think. Nobody has snuck off. 😊

That was a long sit, O.

Question: Yes. Yesterday you mentioned about pain and how it changes when you try to do a bit more. I've been trying to test that. I've had a few sitting in which I tried short ones and others where I tried to sit through. Today was really painful.

Linda: Whereabouts?

Question: The part of the back that touches the floor and the back.

Linda: Is it still there?

Question: No, it's gone. One beautiful thing is that I appreciate more the sits in which I can push.

Linda: I prefer to say, extend yourself, rather than push, but I know what you mean. I used to do that, mainly in the mornings during retreats. Then in the afternoon I'd give myself a bit of a break and just sit the half-hour sits. But in the morning, for me, that was the time I really put a lot of energy into it. And it's fascinating watching the way you limit yourself and that threshold that you think is fixed but it keeps moving. That is what really makes you stronger. So, good. But be careful you don't push too much too.

Question: You said your teacher in Japan said to accept everything. It seems very mental because that's the outcome of the path, when you're enlightened, then you're able to accept everything naturally. But while you're still on the path, telling yourself to accept everything seems like saying cheer-up to someone who's depressed. But I'm certain that's not what he meant or what you meant.

Linda: No, all you can do is see how much you don't accept, and just see it. For example, we tend to think that accept everything means all the big things like traumas. But when you look at it moment by moment with seemingly mundane things – like, "Oh, I shouldn't have eaten that biscuit," whereas you did, or, "I shouldn't have said that to that person," whereas you did – all those small things really build up, so you spend your time regretting and not accepting what has happened. So it's just seeing that that you need to do.

If you could accept everything you probably wouldn't be here, but it leads to that. But it takes a lot and you just keep seeing more and more, any sort of resistance to something that has happened or

that you've done. So maybe saying, "Don't regret things," is really the same thing. Don't regret what you've done. It's already done, just keep going.

But when you are quiet to every little movement, action, and everything you do, you see how little you do accept. So just see it, that's enough, then come back to your body. But you can't accept everything all at once, it's impossible. Eventually you do.

On realisation you do realise and accept everything that has happened in your life. And you see, in a strange way, that it was all necessary. All the stuff that you thought was a mistake or maybe you shouldn't have done – suddenly it all make sense and you realise the reason behind everything because it has brought you to this point. So nothing was wrong, it was all necessary, nothing was a waste of energy.

Question: I look forward to that thinking.

Linda: It's amazing when that happens, when you realise, "Ah, that's why I didn't do that." But it all happens now.

Question: I wonder if you could help me because I was listening very attentively to O. earlier about pain. I think I'm missing the point totally. I've pushed myself and done a lot in my life but I'm lost here about pain. Are you saying to just push right through it?

Linda: I'm not saying to push. Just sit with it. Really watch your reaction to it, but come back to your breath. Use the breath in the belly to be able to just sit there and bear it. You can never really manage it even though you feel like you should be managing it better. Ultimately what you're feeling is that it shouldn't be there. That's the resistance, you think, "Pain shouldn't be there. This pain shouldn't be there. It means I'm doing something wrong."

Question: Isn't the pain there for a reason – to let you know you're doing damage?

Linda: In the physical world at times, yes. But this is a different thing. Like O. said, the pain is not there now. It was there when he was sitting with his eyes closed. But as soon as you open your eyes it's suddenly, miraculously gone. Are you feeling pain right now?

Question: No, but my left knee was on fire. So I just need to build a bit of confidence.

Linda: You're not going to damage yourself sitting. I'd say sit for half an hour on the floor, half an hour on a chair. You built up to it. Physically it does take a while to get used to it too.

Question: I was starting to beat myself up and think this is a waste of time.

Linda: Don't beat yourself up. And it's never a waste of time being here. It's a waste of time not being here. But it can feel at times like, "I'm not managing it properly, this isn't a good meditation, I should be doing it better, I'm wasting my time." That's all the mind.

So don't be too hard on yourself. Don't push yourself too much. It does take time for your body to adjust, especially to sitting on the floor. When I first started my practice I sat on a lounge for a while

and then gradually went down to the floor, and then eventually felt completely at home. So I much prefer sitting on the floor now to a chair. But it's fine, whatever.

It is going to be more intense on the floor but it doesn't mean you have to sit on the floor – sitting on a chair is fine. Use your breath. Come back to the body wherever you're sitting. Try and keep your back as straight as you can. Be very aware of your posture. Don't feel that you should be feeling pain either. Sometimes you will, sometimes you won't. (Laughter)

Question: Yesterday you talked about the intelligence of the body. That gave me a lot of hope. Otherwise you're just trying to calm the mind and feel the body and then there's nothing. I get a sense that there is intelligence in the body, and that it's cradling me. So I was looking at my thoughts this morning and my body said, "It's going to be okay." I think my emotions are really strong. It feels as if the body is calling me. But this morning when you said we only have three days left, I thought, "I've got to make the most of this."

Linda: Two and a half. (Laughter)

Question: It's been a real obstacle for me. How would you deal with these thoughts?

Linda: What can I say? Keep it as simple as you can. Come back to the sensations in the body. The thoughts will keep coming. So what you need to do is be with the body, use it to get off that train of thoughts where you move away and start thinking about something. But it doesn't matter what it (the subject) is. There's always going to be a favourite thought and if one thought goes away another one is quickly going to take its place. So you have to see it's not the subject of the thinking that is important, it's the actual thinking.

The body is just so incredibly intelligent. No mind, however sophisticated, has recreated the body or can completely recreate the body – it's this incredible thing. All this stuff is happening without us thinking about it. The thoughts can affect the function of the body, usually in a detrimental way. But once the thoughts subside the body just starts to function as it's meant to function. But it happens gradually.

What your fear is is that if you don't think your body will die, that you need to think for your body to exist and survive. That's really the deepest fear. That's what people are scared of – "If I don't I think, my body will collapse because I need to think to keep it going."

To do this you have to be really persistent. Just keep it simple. Keep coming back to the fact that my body is here right now – as simple as possible. The mind will try and complicate things, analyse things, analyse thoughts but just see it and come back to the body.

Question: Is it thoughts fighting against other thoughts and that is the problem?

Linda: The issue is the desire to think – not the thoughts themselves – but the desire to think. Why do we want to think? Where does that desire come from? That's what this is all about. It's not about placating the mind and making it all calm. In fact, the nature of the mind is not to be calm. Eventually it subsides but it's always there ready to take over if you let it.

As I said, the thing here is getting to the source of the desire to think. And that lies in your body, deeply in your body. The more grounded you become in the body, the more here you become, here in the body, the more clearly you see what thinking is. It's not the actual thoughts – it doesn't matter what they are – but what thinking is, what it involves. And you start to see more and more how futile it is – you're just going round and round in circles. So I'm not saying to push away the thoughts. Instead, by using the body's intelligence and your innate intelligence – the brain rather than the mind – you start to see that every time you think it's just rehashing something in the past. And you can't be here, it's impossible. In that way you use the body's intelligence to see the nature of thinking. And you trust more and more in the body, and less and less in thinking.

Thinking is deeply habitual and motivated by fear, fear of being here in the body, because ultimately the only thing you know is that one day your body is going to die – that's the only thing you know. You don't know when and you don't know how but everybody's body at some time is going to die and that time is now. So there's this deep fear of being here now. And that's what motivates thinking.

We get taught to think from a very early age by people who, through no fault of their own, have been taught by other people to fear death. They pass on to us what they've been taught, innocently thinking they're doing us a favour, but really they're teaching us fear. This is a chance to break that cycle.

Question: Translating for R.: She says that when she's in meditation sometimes she doesn't know if she's sleeping or if she's in meditation because her head is falling forward. What's happening?

Linda: It's an energetic thing. It's quite common. Try and stay still if she can. But that will happen at times. When I'm watching people there are often a few people moving around a bit.

Question: She feels like she's asleep and dreaming, but at the same time, she feels like she's here because she can still hear people. Is it so?

Linda: It happens quite a bit where it feels a bit like that state just before you go to sleep but you don't actually go to sleep. It's a state of deep relaxation. Don't worry about it. It's quite normal. But what we tend to do is when our body, psyche, feels that relaxed we go to sleep, whereas this is feeling like that in the waking state. So enjoy it, it's fine. But it will change, it will come and go and change

But I know what you mean – you're not asleep but you're not awake. Try and stay as alert as you can because if you start to move around too much it can become a habit. So with anything that becomes a habit, particularly a movement, try and be a bit more alert and don't do it quite as much because you can start to go like that (leaning.) So try and stay straight and every time you feel yourself going forward, come back. Don't beat yourself about it and be too strict. Just be careful of anything that starts to become really habitual, particularly movements like that. But it will happen and it is the energetic effect of this.

Question: I could stop and drink water.

Linda: No, don't try to do that. Just stay there, stay still and watch it.

Question: This morning I haven't felt as much pain as yesterday. It's much better now. I still feel a lot of energy but not the pain, like in my forehead. But in this last meditation I started to feel like a knot or blocking in the top of my stomach. I told myself, "This is fear, don't be afraid." It started to dissolve but it's still there. So then I said, "Stay away from it. I'm not the body. Take a step back and just watch how it moves."

Linda: I would say, don't step back. I would say, get right into it, really feel it. And you might even feel nauseous at times. Have you felt that at all?

Question: Not really. And as I said yesterday, I'm completely, one-hundred percent with the sensations of the body and don't have any thoughts at all. I have to try to just think sometimes, but sitting here I don't have any thoughts at all. I'm just one-hundred percent in the body. So I'm not trying to avoid the situation, because my mind is not here.

Linda: So bring your attention back down here. Don't try and step back away from it. Don't bother saying you're not the body. That's all theory.

Question: You mentioned something about fear earlier.

Linda: What you're feeling down there is fear. Saying to yourself, "I'm not the body," is really not going to help you.

Question: We talked about physical pain but I ended up spending a lot of the morning thinking about how painful it is to be an introvert in a world that feels like it's run by ninety-nine percent extroverts. My thoughts kept coming back to how painful it is, and yet I'm not in a setting where it matters – we're in silence here so I don't need to be thinking that but I did, over and over again.

Linda: Oh, A. you're such a beautiful man, you really are. Introvert? Don't label yourself an introvert. The last few days when we've been mucking around together, I wouldn't have labelled you an introvert at all. It can feel like that's true when everyone seems to have it together and they know how to behave and they know how to impress people and be funny and fit in – but deep down they probably don't. They're probably just as scared as you, but it's just their way of surviving in the world. Everyone is just trying to survive and everyone's got their own strategies. And often the more sensitive people just can't cope with doing that. So they tend to retreat and go, "Oh, I don't know how to keep up. I don't know how to behave."

But be careful you don't label yourself as that. If you keep saying that to yourself that's how it's going to be, whereas from what I've seen the last week you've been funny, you have a great sense of humour. So, yes. You're not by yourself.

Question: I'm an introvert too maybe because I hate speaking. I find myself in a place where I've been many times before and I can't seem to get beyond it – if that's the right word. I get very, very quiet with no thoughts or the thoughts have no traction. It's really very pleasant and I'm quite alert but after a while I feel bored with it. It feels flat even though I am paying attention, I'm not falling asleep. I try getting closer to that to see if I can give it some interest and keep my attention. Any suggestions?

Linda: I would suggest not trying to change it. So don't try to move towards it or away from it. Look more at the fact that you're bored rather than trying to change that boredom into something more interesting. The boredom is just a reaction to the absence of something that you find, or you used to find, interesting. It's a transitional period but it's really important not to try and change it or to do anything with it – just sit with it. And that's harder than trying to interact with it in some way and change it. So do your best just to sit with it. Watch your thoughts about it, "Oh, this is boring. This is how it's going to be. Enlightenment is going to be so boring because there's nothing there."

Emptiness, absence – initially there is that reaction of boredom because you're so used to things being there.

Question: "The emptiness is boring."

Linda: Yes, and, "If this is it, I don't want it because it's so boring, there's nothing there." Then you go back to something there because you find that more interesting, or you try and find something or turn the boredom into some *thing*. Absence – initially there is that reaction of boredom because you're so used to things being there and suddenly it's not there. "So what do I do now?" Try not to do anything except just be with it. Don't try and get through it or past it. You might not be able to be in that state for very long to start with but that will change. And really watch your judgment of it as boring, as boredom. Boredom is a thought, it's a definitely a reaction. So it's a very subtle form of resistance. But you see it as boredom, "This is boring." So just sit with it. Try to not do anything to do anything with it. And it's often harder not to do anything with something than to actually get in and change it to how you think it should be or how you think you want it to be, which is not boring.

It does change. It changes completely. So all the drama, all the stuff, that's what eventually becomes pretty tedious and uninteresting.